MOUNTAINEER

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WINTER, 1950 VOLUME 8, NO. 2

Sponsors

Auld Lang Syne

By DAVID N. LINDEELL

ILLUSTRATED BY BOB DELANEY

Michael Rollins slumped in his chair, stretching his legs out before him, and watched the fire. The flames licked up from under the logs, burning them black, eating them away. The logs hissed in mild protest. He could feel the fire hot against his legs and he withdrew them a little.

It's funny, he thought. I've just eaten a good dinner and now I'm lounging before my fireplace just as if nothing was wrong, just as if everything was the same as yesterday. Yesterday was Monday and today is Tuesday. Tuesday is a harmless day, he thought. Nothing ever happens on Tuesday. Friday is payday at the factory. Friday all the men are paid and things happen. That man—What was his name? Tamolevitch or Tamilofski or something like that—It doesn't matter. He worked in the cutting department, I think it was, for three years. He shot his wife on Friday. It was over his paycheck.

The fire was too hot now and Michael pushed his chair back and the rug came with it. He looked at the fold in the rug for a moment before slumping down in the chair again.

That's better, he thought. What else happened on Friday? I fired the best foreman we ever had on Friday. I remember because his check was all made out. No. that was Saturday, but Friday was the last day he worked. I remember his name. Benson. Funny how few names I do know. Benson—a Swede. A lot of Swedes work in the factory. There must be a thousand of them. Good workers. I always like to hire Swedes. But, I had to fire Benson. He got drunk the night before and Saturday he was still drunk and I fired him. Shouldn't have done that, I suppose. He was a good man. But, you can't have that sort of thing going on. You overlook it once and everyone will try it. Good man, though. The union made me take him back. Put him in the stockroom. He didn't like that much, I guess, but I was in the right.

Saturday is a bad day, too. Everyone goes out on Saturday night. Anything can happen on Saturday night. Lot of automobile accidents. Other things, too. The warehouse on Railroad Avenue burned down on a Saturday night. Vandals. Kids of men who work in the factory, too. They don't bring those kids up right. Friday and Saturday are both bad days, but nothing ever happened on Tuesday until today.

This afternoon, Tuesday afternoon, at two-thirty-six the telegram came. Funny how I looked at my watch when the boy handed it to me. I guess I knew it was an important moment. I guess I knew the telegram meant the end. Morris was with me. And Drakeson. Scranton was on the phone at the time. He had been calling all day at regular intervals. He knew something was up. He's not as stupid as he appears sometimes, I guess. He was holding the late edition until he found out what was in that telegram.

I felt kind of hemmed in. I don't know why I felt that way. Morris and Drakeson were my friends and old Scranton had done everything the old

man and I had told him to do. He had printed only what we wanted him to. We had a man down there advising him and he always took the advice. Yet, I felt hemmed in. Morris and Drakeson watched me like a couple of vultures waiting to jump on a piece of meat when they were sure it was dead. And old Scranton squeaking on the phone. I just hung up on Scranton.

Yes, I knew before I opened it, that the telegram was bad news. You can feel it because it means so much. You always prepare yourself, keep telling yourself the worst will happen. You tell yourself so much that you almost believe it.

I had to sit down at the desk to open it. I'm not used to such things, I guess. The old man might have been better—acted as if he didn't care in front of Morris and Drakeson. He acted as if he didn't give a damn for anything before the men. They seemed to respect him more. The old man had had a rocky time in the twenties, but no one could tell that by his actions.

But, I had to sit down and I felt hemmed in with those two vultures watching me. They knew, too. And they didn't seem to care. Just watched me out of curiosity—curiosity to see how I would take it. They knew what the telegram meant. If we didn't get the government contract, we were through. We had to have it. All the other companies had moved West to St. Louis. Power rates were too high in this part of the country. And labor was too high. But, not the old man. He wouldn't move. Had too much tied up here, he said. He ran this town and wasn't going to leave it just because things were a little tough. We did all right, too, after the others left. But, I knew what would happen. The others set themselves up in St. Louis with cheaper power and cheaper labor and began under-bidding us. The war was fine. Went great guns during the war. We made shoes for the army then. But now, we can't get a decent contract. For six months we've been shut down four days a week.

Yet, when I opened the telegram and read what I knew would be there, I felt no different. It didn't seem true. Morris and Drakeson watched me, but didn't say anything. I felt embarrassed then and smiled at them. I read the words aloud. "Doyle got contract. Any instructions." It was signed H. G.—Herbert Ganan. Young fellow just out of the State university three years. It's funny—I felt sorry for Ganan. I felt downright sorry for him. He had a good job with us. Good money. Now he'd have to start all over again. I thought quite a while about young Ganan.

I didn't hear Drakeson the first time. "What now," he asked again.

"I don't know," I said, but I did and so did they.

"We'll be closing down of course," said Morris.

I coudn't find any trace of regret in his tone and that made me look at him a moment.

"Clear out of here for a while, will you?"

They seemed reluctant to leave, but Drakeson closed the door behind them.

I buzzed Edith on the inter-office phone and told her to get a wire off to Ganan. "Just tell him to come home," I said. Home. Home.

A log fell in the fireplace and Michael looked at it, broken in the center. He clenched his right hand into a fist and hit the arm of the chair.

Upstairs the old man was coughing.

Home, he thought. And I sat in that office a long time thinking of home. I thought about Mary and about little Tommy and about the old man, sick now for two years.

I called Mary and told her about the wire.

"I'll come by and pick you up, Michael," she said.

"I can't leave the office yet, Mary."

"I'll be there in ten minutes." And then she hung up.

I still felt as though it was still all a dream. I stood at the window watching for the car. When it came I put on my hat and coat and started through the outer office, but Scranton was there by that time and he stopped me. It was then I lost that unreal feeling.

"What are you going to do now," he asked.

His face was flushed and I didn't like him at that moment. "We're closing down, Scranton. You can put that in your paper." And then he did it. He cleared his throat and spat on the floor. It takes a lot of feeling to do something like that. I'd never given Scranton much thought. At least I had never worried about what he thought or how he felt. He had been just an old man who did what he was told.

I walked out, then. I couldn't think of anything else to do.

I wonder what the old man would have done when Scranton spat on the floor. I wonder what he would have done. The old man, king of this city since he had built his factory here forty years ago. That's what they called him—the Shoe King. Shoes for the whole family. Shoes for every need. Shoes for men—heavy working shoes with high tops, low cut, dress shoes. Shoes for comfort—saddle shoes, loafers, moccasins. Shoes for women—suede pumps with high heels, open-toed shoes, sandals, wedgies. Shoes for the children. Shoes for everyone. Shoes for the whole country.

Michael's mind raced. For forty years every living thing in this city existed because the old man had built his factory. here. And what's more, every living thing knew it.

The Shoe King. And he acted like a king. A real king. He had been smart, aggressive. The factory had grown and the city had grown with it and the old man had ruled it all For forty years the old man had ruled it all.

Michael sat for a long while trying to figure out what the old man would have done when Scranton spit on the floor.

Mary came into the room softly and stopped, watching the back of Michael's head. Then, she went to him and sat down on the arm of his chair. For a long time he watched the fire while Mary stroked his head.

Finally, Mary got up to stir at tne fire with the poker.

"Have you seen the paper around?" asked Michael.

"Sarah has it in the kitchen. She thought you wouldn't want to see it tonight. I'll get it."

She returned in a moment wiht the paper, handed it to Michael and settled herself on the divan. She opened a book and pretended to read.

Michael looked at the headline. ROLLINS CLOSING DOWN. And the subhead, FAILURE TO WIN CONTRACT ENDS FORTY YEAR RULE. He read the story. He read it twice and then let the paper fall to the floor.

He watched the fire with half closed eyes and listened to the old man coughing upstairs while Mary turned the pages of the book without seeing a word.

The fire was low and Michael got up to put a log on it, but changed his mind and went to the window instead. Looking out into the windy December night, he saw three men standing under an elm near the streetlight. "Mary," he said without turning around.

"What is it, Michael?"

"Nothing, I guess—nothing." He turned and went back to his chair.

Outside the cold air swept in gusts down Main Street and the elms swayed and creaked their branches. The three men huddled close together, talking in low tones.

"Someone's coming," said one. The others looked down the street at the approaching figure.

"I've seen him before," said the second man." He works for the Post."

When the man was abreast of them, he stopped. "Is anything going on tonight?" He asked

"What do you mean?" said the first.

"Well—that's Rollins' place isn't it?"

"Is it?"

"Now look, I'm a reporter for the Post and if anything is going on around here, I want to be here. That's all. I've got to make a living, you know."

"Nothing's going to happen."

I guess that's so, thought the reporter. "O. K., boys, I believe you. Goodnight." He turned and walked down the street.

I suppose they won't do anything, he thought. Wouldn't make sense. Old Scranton said that. He said it would have made a lot of sense if they had done something long ago. Forty years ago, even. I don't remember those days.

The reporter turned down a side street toward the tracks and the rows of workers' houses. The gusty wind followed and swirled masses of leaves across the pavement in front of him.

Scranton is a strange duck. He came back from the factory this afternoon, went into his office and shut the door without so much as a yap to anyone. He must have been in there an hour. All that time the presses were

stopped, waiting for the story he was writing. I finally went in to see if he'd died or something and there he was, just sitting there with the story, all finished, lying on the desk in front of him. Then he says, "you know, Ted, I feel like I've been handed back my soul and I don't even feel glad about it." What a hell-of-a-thing to say. Don't make sense.

I asked him what he thought the men would do now. He says, "starve." I tell him that's not what I mean. I mean tonight and he says, "nothing at all. It's too late now."

The reporter crossed the tracks and turned down Railroad Avenue. It was getting colder by the minute. Maybe it's going to snow, he thought.

He walked along the street. Hulking warehouses on one side and grim little workers' houses in a rigid line on the other. In a few months all or most of these houses will be vacant, he thought. Where will they all go?

A man, carrying a small package, was approaching from the opposite direction. That looks like Benson, the reporter thought. Must be late for supper tonight.

"Hello, Johnny."

"Hello, Ted," answered Benson. He tried to pass the reporter, but Ted stopped him.

"Say, Johnny. You hear of anything going on tonight?"

"No. What do you mean?"

"Oh nothing, really—there's three men up at Rollins' place. Can't figure out what they're doing up there."

"Yeah? Well, I don't know Why ask me?"

"Just thought you might know."

"Well, I don't. See you later, Ted."

Benson walked past the reporter and down the street finally turning in at one of the houses.

"What kept you, John? The children are starved. Did you get the hamburg?"

"Here." He handed his wife the package and watched as she carried it to the table to unwrap it. "I had to go all the way down town to get it."

"This isn't hamburg," she said, turning toward Benson.

A little bare-footed girl entered from the bedroom. "What is it, Mommy? What is it?"

The woman watched her husband. "These are pork chops. You know we can't afford pork chops, especially now. Why on earth did you get them? Hamburg was good enough."

Benson felt irritated. He looked down at the table and said in a low voice, "I bought pork chops."

"Oh, John, for Heaven's sake"

"I like pork chops," said the little girl.

I know you do, Baby, thought Benson. I know you do.

"I suppose we'll have to use them now that you got them. Go wash up,

John. I'll call you when they're ready. Get Ronnie in, too. He's out back hammerin' on that old bike. Can't see how he can see out there."

Later, the family sat around the kitchen table, eating. My family, thought Benson. My family. Rita and Ronnie and little Paddy. Four of us and we are all eating pork chops.

"I'm all through, Ma. Can I leave the table?"

"You and Paddy can run along, but don't go outside. It's getting windy out there and you'll catch cold."

"Aw, Ma."

When the children had left the room, Rita looked at her husband. "What are we going to do now?"

Benson stared at the table. "Oh—get moving, I suppose. We can't stay here."

"Where will we go? Can you get a job somewhere else?"

"Oh—I guess so—have to."

"I think we ought to go to St Louis. You could get a job there. There's lots of shoe factories there."

"That's a long way, Rita," Benson said wearily.

"But we can't stay here. You said so yourself."

"I know."

"Well, what are we going to do? You just can't sit there and say I know, I know."

"What do you want me to say? What do you want me to do? Go tell Rollins he can't shut down his damn factory? Tell him I don't know what to do so he better keep it open?

"Don't be nasty."

"I'm not being nasty. I just don't know what to do." And I don't care, either, he thought. What difference does it make? Where will I ever get? No matter what happens, there is one thing sure— I won't give a damn. I don't care if the factory shuts down. Jesus Christ! Every day dragging myself out of bed when it is still dark and walking to the factory and working all day and coming home and eating supper and going down to Jake's for a beer and going to bed and the next day the same all over again. When does it end? Where does it get you?

When I first went to work for Rollins I was eager. Jesus, was I eager. They liked me, too. But soon I didn't like it. All day long the pounding and stamping and clicking and grinding of the machines. And when lunch hour came and they shut off the machines—the silence—heavy, heavy silence. I couldn't stand that damn silence. I wanted to yell, TURN ON THOSE DAMN MACHINES. LET'S HAVE SOME GRINDING, STAMPING, POUNDING, GOD DAMN IT, LET'S HAVE SOME NOISE.

Jesus!

And the time. God, how I watched the clock. I'd try not to think about the time. If I watched the clock, time dragged. It didn't seem to move at all.

I'd try to forget the clock. Try to think of other things. I'd think about how it would be to go down to Lally Motors and pick out a new car. I'd think about it over and over again. I'd buy a dark green convertible. I'd walk all around it, first, and look it over. I'd open the hood and look at the motor. Then, I'd get in behind the wheel. Then,I'd get out and ask the guy a lot of questions. How many miles to the gallon? Would the finish hold up—and the upholstery? And he'd smile and tell me everything. And I'd see he was worried cause I asked too many questions and might not buy the car. And then, I'd say I wanted a heater. Had a lot of winter driving to do. Yes, I'd want a heater and a radio, too. How much would they cost? I'd think about this over and over again.

Or I'd think about something else. Sometimes I'd think about going to the Cape and building a cottage there right on the beach. I'd go through the whole process—just exactly how I'd build it and what I'd put into it. Building that cottage would take two hours sometimes.

I'd think about women a lot. Sometimes I'd pick one of the girls in the stitching department and think about her. But, mostly I'd think about Mrs. Rollins. I'd seen her a couple times. I'd think about meeting her some place and she giving me the come-on and me going to her place when Rollins was out. Jesus! But, it passed the time.

And then, they made me a foreman. Jesus, I was glad. I could have licked Drakeson's hand when he told me. God, I was important. Foreman. Sounded good. And more pay—not much more, but more. Just when Rita was having Ronnie, too.

I was glad. But then, what did it mean? They told me what to do, just like before. Only now, I couldn't think. I'd walk around. Tell the guys to keep busy. The bastards used to fool around, tell dirty jokes, try to get the girls behind the machines. I'd try like hell to keep them working. And then—what the hell. What was in it for me? The girls would give me dirty looks and the guys would grumble and gum things up whenever they had a chance. For four more bucks a week I'm going to be a bastard? So then, I let them fool around until Morris or Drakeson or Rollins came around, then, I'd crack the whip like I was a tough customer. Everyone ate it up. They'd all pretend to work like mad and the guys in the office fell for it. You're the best foreman we have says Rollins one day Jesus!

But, one night I got loaded with the boys and the next day Rollins fires me. Then, he takes me back in the stockroom. Jesus, you can't even think about things in there. All you do is load and unload and carry things around. Thought it was a gag at first. I was the best foreman Rollins had. He said so himself. But, he never took me out. Jesus, just for getting drunk. They say he gets drunk and doesn't show up at work at all sometimes. Drakeson told me that. I don't think Drakeson likes him either. But Drakeson kisses his ass and Rollins eats it up.

"I still think we ought to go to St Louis," said Rita startling Benson from his thoughts.

"Yes, Rita. We'll go to St. Louis."

Abruptly, he got up and went into the bedroom. Groping in the top drawer of the bureau, he pulled out a little brown booklet. He read the words on the cover. The First National Bank. Open Daily from 10 A. M. to 2 P. M. Saturday from 9:30 to 12 noon. Closed on Usual Holidays.

Then, he opened the booklet and read the balance. Seven hundred and thirty-three dollars and fifty cents. Move to St. Louis on seven hundred and thirty-three dollars and fifty cents.

He put on his mackinaw and cap. "I'm going out for a walk, Rita. Be back in a little while."

Outside, with his hands plunged deep in his pockets and his collar turned up against the wind, he headed toward town along Railroad Avenue, across the tracks and then along Main street to Jake's Bar.

There was just an old man at one end of the bar. Otherwise the place was empty. Still early, thought Benson as he sat down on one of the stools.

The bartender was putting some coins in the jukebox. He turned and came around behind the bar. "Hi, Johnny. Beer?"

"Yeah."

The jukebox hummed, clicked, and blared with a novelty tune played by a tinny orchestra as Jake filled a glass with beer and set it in front of Benson.

A sour voice cried from the jukebox with crazy words.

Benson lifted the glass, cool and wet in his hand, and drank half the contents. He listened to the crazy words and felt the tangy liquid run down his throat. Then, he finished the beer.

The old man had moved over to Benson. "Care to join my celebration, Fella?" said the old man.

"That all depends on what you're celebrating."

"Oh, a great thing. I now have a soul. Haven't had one for a long time, you know."

Benson smiled. "Been saved, huh?"

"No, son—not exactly. Just plain got my soul back. Bartender, we want another round. I want . . ."

"Yes, I know," cut in Jake. "You want bourbon and water."

"Yes, I want bourbon and water. And don't mix them."

"Yes, don't mix them," mimicked Jake.

"And my friend here," the old man went on, "wants a—what are you drinking, Fella? Beer?"

"Yeah."

"And my friend here wants a beer."

Jake brought the drinks. He winked at Benson. "Your buddy here has

an awful thirsty soul. He's gonna wish he never got it back tomorrow morning."

The old man gulped the bourbon. "You're right, Bartender. I don't even want it now—but I got it and there's nothing I can do about it."

The jukebox stopped. Then, it hummed, clicked, and played again.

The old man sat in silence for a while looking at the little glass in front of him. Then, he drained the glass and continued to sit, oblivious of everything except the empty glass before him. A tear rolled down his wrinkled cheek.

"Excuse me," he said.

Benson and Jake watched him move unsteadily toward the lavatory. He stopped and stared at the floor. Then he cleared his throat and spat.

"Hey, you," said Jake, but the old man had disappeared through the door.

"Jesus, he's loaded," observed Benson.

"Yeah," said Jake. "I'll probably have trouble with him later. That's the second time he's spit on the floor. Pretty easy with his money, though. He bought all the boys a drink a little while ago."

"Yeah? Where are they now?"

"I don't know exactly. They was talking about going up to Rollins' house. Don't know if they did or not though."

Benson finished his beer and got up to leave. "I think I'll go see if I can find the boys."

As he headed for the door, the jukebox stopped. Then, it hummed, clicked, and played again.

Again outside, Benson walked along Main street toward town.

Looking ahead, he could see a group of men standing on the front lawn of Rollin's house and, then, he could hear the singing. He walked toward them. HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW, WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY. WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY, WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY, HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY. Then, they started again.

One of the group turned. "Hi, Johnny," he shouted. "Come and join us. We're cheering up Rollins."

Benson stood close to the group, but did not sing. Some of the men were a little drunk, he noticed. But, Chiloskus wasn't. Benson watched Chiloskus. He's dead serious, thought Benson. He's dead serious and singing like mad.

HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FEL-LOW, WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY.

"Let's sing Auld Lang Syne," shouted someone.

"You start it."

A single voice struggled with the wind—SHOULD AULD ACQUAINT-

ANCE BE FORGOT—and the others joined in and the song swelled and rode above the wind.

Benson felt a loose brick in the walk at his feet. He picked it up and ran his hand over the smooth surfaces. Smooth, he thought. Smooth with sharp edges. He just stood there, listening to the song and thinking about the seven hundred and thirty-three dollars and feeling the smooth surfaces and sharp edges of the brick. FOR AULD LANG SYNE, MY DEAR, FOR AULD LANG SYNE, WE'LL TAKE A CUP OF KINDNESS, YET, FOR AULD LANG SYNE . . . .

Inside the house, Mary sat, gazing at her book, hearing the wind and the song and Michael sat with half-closed eyes near the dying fire, hearing only the song.

Mary laid the book aside and stood up. "I'm going up and look in on Tommy," she said, softly.

Michael nodded, but did not take his eyes from the glowing ashes.

When she was gone, he closed his eyes completely. SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT, AND NEVER BROUGHT TO MIN'? SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT, AND AULD LANG SYNE? FOR AULD LANG SYNE, MY DEAR, FOR AULD LANG SYNE . . . .

Then, the brick crashed through the window and thudded on the carpet amidst a spray of glassy splinters.

Cold air rushed into the room carrying the song—WE'LL TAKE A CUP OF KINDNESS, YET, FOR AULD LANG SYNE.

Clipped

By JOHN OWEN

ILLUSTRATED BY NANCY FIELDS

Leroy walked down the dusty street, between the four unpainted stores that comprised the business district of Howard's Junction. He touched his collar as if assuring himself that the tiny fringe of hair still protruded over the edge; then, once again, resumed his shuffling walk that formed little clouds of dust about his knees.

Although he was almost six feet tall, his huge, hard-toe boots seemed to comprise the greater part of his weight. He was past forty, yet his features seemed only partially completed, resembling those of a boy of seventeen or eighteen. Long black sideburns lengthened the lower half of his face, while bushy eyebrows created an opposite effect on his forehead. Dressed in a shiny pair of black trousers and a striped dress shirt, open at the throat, he resembled a somewhat dignified scarecrow.

Leroy turned into an odd-shaped building that was identified as a garage only by the battered gas pump that stood at its entrance.

"Mornin', Winston," he said automatically on seeing a short, thin man with white hair, busily patching an ancient inner tube.

"Mornin', Leroy. Sure is a delightful day ain't it? I was tellin' Ella 'smornin' that we ain't had a day like this all Spring. Nice and warm out, yet not warm enough to make a body uncomfortable. You see don't cha?" He said this last phrase as if it were one word. "What 'cha all dressed up for?"

Leroy's mouth turned up slightly at the corners in what he thought was a sly smile. "Oh, sorta thought I might take a little trip to town," he answered.

"What fer?" Winston asked excitedly. "Ya went to the county seat last Tuesday so ya hadn't ought to have to go there so soon a-gin. Couldn't be goin' to visit Martha and her family in Tree Top Falls cause you went there not more'n a week ago." Winston weighed every possibility before he let the younger man answer.

"Gotta get me a haircut." After saying this, the corners of Leroy's mouth turned up a little more, in what he thought was an even slyer smile.

"Why you old dog you, whyn't you tell me a'fore? If I'd a known you was goin', I maybe could of talked Ella into lettin' me go too. I don't hardly think she'd have let me go anyway, but it'd been worth a try. If we both woulda been able to go, we'd really have a time. Why the heck didn't you tell me? I mighta been able to talk her into lettin' me go if I'd a had the time."

"Didn't know I was goin' myself until this mornin'. The woman just up and suggested it. She said, 'Leroy, Henry's comin' home tomorrow and we'll all be goin' to the dance together, so whyn't you go into Monroe tonight and get a hair cut?" Imagine her suggestin' it?"

"Why you could bury me on the spot if Ella ever said that." Winston sighed. "The only times a body can really let himself go is when he goes to Monroe to get a haircut. We really used to have some times didn't we? Re-

member when Hector Langley got hold of them firecrackers?" Winston very seldom let anyone answer his questions when he spoke. "He sat out in the middle of the street, right in a mudpuddle, and threw them at ever'body that come by. Yes sir, a body can't have that kind of fun when he's with his woman. You see don't cha? Seems like it takes forever for my hair to get long any more. Use to average 'bout once ever' month, but now I'm lucky if I get to go three times a year. You see don't cha? Who's goin' with you?"

Leroy paused for a moment to be sure that Winston was through talking. "Ned and Smokey prob'ly. Jim would'a gone only his wife sent away for a pair of clippers and seems bound that she's gonna cut his hair from now on. She got terrible mad when she seen us bring him in last time." Leroy turned up the corners of his mouth once more. "Well I gotta be goin'. I told Ned and Smokey I'd check with them afore noon."

"When'd you say your boy Henry was comin' home?" Winston seemed reluctant to see Leroy leave.

"Tomorrow I think. I thought I'd told you."

"Well, maybe you did, but I forgot. Did he tell you what he's been doin' in Fargo when he wrote last?"

Leroy paused in the doorway. "Well, no. He did say something 'bout he's been gettin' some sort of trainin' I do think he's prob'ly plannin' on comin' back and helpin' in the grainery. Prob'ly wants to surprise me. Well, like I said, Winston, I gotta be goin'. See ya tomorrow."

'Sure wish I was goin' with you," Winston said. "Bout the only chance we get for havin' any fun anymore is goin' to Monroe. You see don't cha?"

Leroy walked through the door nodding and waving a bony hand in farewell. Once again he shuffled down the street, smiling and whistling. He turned into a building that resembled a small barn. Over the door was a splintered sign that read, Ned's Hardware and Genr'l Str.

"Howdy, Ned," Leroy called to a red-faced man playing solitare in the rear of the store. "Ya find out for sure if ya can go?"

The other man looked up slowly as he recognized the voice. "Well I shore ain't."

"You ain't, well how come? Won't the woman let you go?" Leroy sounded disappointed. He'd always said that Ned was the funniest thing on two legs when he had had a few drinks in him.

"Of course she won't, you ought ta know that."

"Well now I don't know what I've got to do with it." Leroy sounded hurt. "I never even went with you the last time. It was Smokey that kept honkin' the horn on his car when you got home. Don't ya remember? I never even went."

"That ain't what I'm talkin' about. Now if you'll excuse me Leroy, I got a lot of work to do."

Leroy walked slowly out the door as Ned continued to play solitaire. When he reached the street, he kicked up a huge cloud of dust and then began to mutter to himself. He glanced up and saw that Smokey Sheen was walking slowly down the street.

"Hey, Smokey, wait up." Leroy broke into a wobbling gallop, leaving a trail of dust behind him. His legs seemed to become entangled as they swung in and out, back and forth at what seemed to be the same time. When he caught up with the bony man in faded levi's and a dust covered shirt, he began to talk excitedly.

"Smokey, you wouldn' hardly belive it, but Ned prac'ly . . ."

He stopped when he saw that the other man did not even pause in his walk or raise his eyes to Leroy's.

"Smokey, you're goin' to Monroe today ain't ya?" Leroy asked.

"Huh!" the other man said.

"Well ain't ya?"

Smokey turned the corner without raising his head, and started to walk away. "Huh!" he said.

Leroy stood still for a moment and then began to walk toward the grainery. "I guess he ain't goin' either," he muttered to himself. When he reached the small building, he climbed into an ancient Ford, started it methodically and drove away, hardly seeing the road.

When he had gone almost a mile, he saw the two Miller boys taking the day's mail from the silver box near the road. Leroy lifted his arm in a

wave, but the two gangling boys spat in unison and walked away. He drove on in bewilderment.

Leroy maneuvered the rattling car across a wooden cattle-guard and stopped it with a sputter beside a once white house. At the door, he was greeted by a squat, grey-haired woman in her middle forties.

"Leroy," she gushed, "Henry's home."

A slightly smaller version of Leroy, with a toothy grin spread across his face, stood in the doorway.

"Hiya Pop."

"Well now Henry, I shore am glad to see you. How you been?"

"Fine, how you been."

"Oh, I been fine. Well, it sure is good to see you again. How you been?"

"Now you two can talk about all that later," Martha said. "Come on into the house."

Leroy walked into the house with one arm around Martha and the other around Henry. "To heck with Smokey and the rest." he almost said.

Martha steered them into the dimly lit living room and brought out cookies and milk.

"When'd you get into town, Henry?" Leroy asked.

"Oh, 'bout ten. I hitched a ride from Fargo instead of takin' the bus."

"Why, I was down town then. Wonder why I didn't see you?"

"I dunno. I saw most of the fellas, but you wasn't around. The Miller boys finally give me a ride home.

"I guess I must'a been in the General store " Leroy said.

"Well, I guess I better start gettin' dinner." Martha got up and walked out of the room.

"Say, Henry," Leroy said in a whisper, "How'd you like to go with me to Monroe tonight?" He opened and closed one eye like a frog in what he thought was a wink.

"What fer?"

"Gotta get me a haircut." Leroy laughed, hoping that Henry would catch the inflection.

"I gotta surprise for you Pop," Henry said. "You don't have to go." There was a quavering excitement in his voice indicating that he evidently did not catch the inflection.

"Why not?" Leroy asked.

"Like I wrote ya, I been takin' trainin' and I'm gonna open up a barber shop here in town. That way, nobody'll have to go all the way to Monroe just for nothin'."

The Long Corridor

By PAT CONNOLLY

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE GOGAS

He lay in bed between fresh white sheets, quiet, and resting. The busy hum of the hospital floated about him. The noise from the corridor brought life into his room—the clatter of quick feet, voices, the clinking of glass, the rustle of rubber-tired wheels. And the smell of medicine and disinfectants, now, rested easily over everything.

It was good to lie back and rest, to think, to plan for the day when he would swing his feet over the side of the bed, walk down that long corridor—walk out into the fresh outdoors. That day would be happiness.

A month before, when he had first entered the hospital, he had been frightened. It had happened so unexpectedly. He had been at work when suddenly his chest had developed a strange gripping pain, his heart had swelled in agony, his breath had been snatched away. and he had collapsed.

When they told him that he had had a heart attack, he could not believe it. He was young, only twenty-five, big, strong. He had never been sick before. He was Larry Johnson, former football star. How could it be?

The doctor had quieted his fears. Plenty of rest, he had said, would work wonders. So Larry had rested, but he remained a little amazed that this had happened to him.

Then ten days after his admittance into the hospital, he had another attack, but he had survived it, too. When the doctor and nurse had exclaimed, "My, you did give us a scare!", he had laughed and replied, "I'm too tough to go." And he told himself that he would benefit from this—that every man should have an enforced rest, time to summarize his life, to study his faults, to right his wrongs, to learn the value of the life that occupies him.

Every day, as today, he planned and studied for the time of his release. His boss had told him that if he acquired a working knowledge of Spanish, he would be transferred to New York as head of the export department, so conscientiously he studied grammar. Then too, he read the books that he had always wanted to read, books that he remembered were listed as classics—WAR AND PEACE, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, EMERSON'S ESSAYS, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH—but his mind often slipped from the pages and molded his plans to fully enjoy the sunshine ,the trees, the summer stars, the snow of winter, the cool night air—everything out there—everything that lay waiting at the end of the corridor.

He occupied his daytime with these thoughts and studies, and in the evenings he had Lois.

When she came in, she brought the freshness of the summer. She put her cool hand into his, and some of her health and vitality escaped from her fingers and seeped into his body. She answered his eager questions with

details about the office, picnics, the life out there. And when she kissed him goodnight, he thought of their future marriage.

But now it was night. And the nights were always lonely. He tried to sleep, but lay awake and wished for the busy noises of daylight. His only company was that empty bed across from him. It seemed to be crouching there, waiting, obsessed with loneliness—stretching out dimly in the darkness—

of death—his death—but the steady beat soon quieted his fears, and he thought instead, and with relief, of fishing and a cool, deep stream.

He dozed, but woke with a start and stared into the grayness. He wished white, barren, alone. He closed his eyes to chase it from his mind, but its white loneliness clung to his eyelids. Then he thought he felt his heart pain, and he dared for the first time, and only for a moment, to think of his heart, for daylight Then he heard the shuffle of feet. Mrs. Carten, the night nurse, was coming to see him. No matter what floor she worked on, she usually stopped in for a chat before going home. She filled the void between grayness and daylight.

"Hello, Larry," she said as she shut the door. "I think Sister suspects that I'm smoking in here. Oh, hell, who cares." She sat down in the chair, stretched her feet, relaxed, and lit a cigarette. "Boy, what a night—babies, deaths, medicines, new patients—I'm telling you I was running all night. They better get more help around here—but they won't. And what can I do? Two children. No husband. Guess all I can do is to just keep trotting along."

Larry watched her red, middle-aged face as she puffed mightily on her cigarette, and he waited for her to tell her latest bawdy stories. She always had a fresh supply, and he enjoyed her raw humor. She was like a lusty wind.

Mrs. Carten entertained him until daylight brightened the room, and then after she had left, the day nurse brought in his wash water. The day was before him.

After breakfast, the doctor, in his usual hurry, rushed into the room. He was a little man with the sure, quick movements of a sparrow. As he listened through the stethoscope to Larry's heart, he rolled his eyes and said, "Well, well. Coming along fine." He replaced the stethoscope in its case and patted Larry gently on the head.

"Say, Doc," Larry said, "just one more week, and then I can get out of this bed."

The doctor frowned. "We have to take it easy. You had two bad attacks, you know."

"Yes, but you said that I'm coming along fine. I can get up next week, can't I?"

The doctor smiled, "Everything is fine, but we can't take the chance of a setback. Just relax. Maybe in a month." And he hurried out the door.

Larry was disturbed. Another month! Another month to lie and wait, another month to play with dreams.

The day passed slowly, and in the evening Lois could not free him from his feeling of depression. After she left, he lay in dread of the night, but it was not as lonely as he had expected.

A new patient came in late that night and occupied the bed opposite him. He was a pathetically thin little man. Huge, brown, sorrowful eyes filled his small face, and heavy lines anchored at the corners of his mouth. He came over to Larry's bed and introduced himself. "I'm Carl Jacobs."

Carl talked most of the night. He told Larry of his wife and three children who lived in the country. "It's too bad when a man knows that his family doesn't need him. They've learned to get along without me. My wife cooks at a lumber camp. They don't need me—I guess it's best that way."

Larry lay in the darkness and listened to the soft voice of Carl. The words seemed tinged with the same sadness that colored his eyes. Larry searched for kind words of encouragement, but none reached his lips.

Carl talked on as if he had long awaited the opportunity to confess to this silent, darkened room the secrets of his heart. His voice crept over to

Larry. "I hate hospitals. I've spent half my life in them, I think. I leave one, and I'm right back—maybe some other place, another damn hospital—but always the same room, the same bed."

Larry said weakly, "You have to keep your mind outside of these walls."

"Yeah, I know, but the walls creep in—then you've only one thing to think about."

Larry did not answer, and they both remained silent the rest of the night, waiting for daylight.

All through that day, and following days, Carl lay silently in bed, staring at the ceiling, smoking incessantly, and speaking only when night filled the room. Then he talked as if to the darkness alone. "The doc wants to keep me here under observation—build me up in case they need to cut. In a month or so a brain specialist is coming. Maybe he will cut, maybe he won't—just another butcher—he won't know. He'll say 'maybe it's a blood clot, and then again, maybe it's not—maybe I better not operate, maybe we better wait and see' . . ."

Suddenly Carl stopped talking. He screamed. Larry snapped on the light. Carl screamed again, clutched his head, and his feet beat violently against the bed. Then, except for low moans, he lay silently on the bed. Saliva bubbled from his lips.

Larry pulled his signal cord. His heart beat rapidly, and he thought, "I can't get excited."

Feet hurried down the corridor, and the blonde night nurse came in. "Did you ring?" She saw Carl stretched on the bed. She heard the low moans. She went to him, grabbed his wrist, and looked anxiously at her wrist watch. She wiped his lips with a towel.

Carl tried to push himself up from the bed, and Larry saw his frantic, bulging eyes. The nurse attempted to push him back, but he knocked her hand away.

"I'll be all right. I'll be all right. Leave me alone."

The frightened nurse stepped back. Slowly Carl pushed himself up into a sitting position. He swung his feet over the side of the bed and put his hands up to his face.

"Are you all right?" the nurse whispered.

"Please leave me alone."

"Well," she answered, "if you are sure—maybe I better call the doctor—"

"Please, don't bother me."

The nurse, with one last worried glance, quietly left the room. Larry and Carl remained in silence.

Three weeks went by. And while Larry had his jokes with Mrs. Carten, his books, his visits with Lois, Carl remained silently stretched on his bed, smoking and blowing lazy smoke rings at the ceiling. He never spoke now, not even at night. He had had eight attacks since his admittance.

Larry often watched him, and one night observed a strange action.

When Mrs. Carten brought the night medications, she gave Larry his first. Then she shuffled over to Carl and dropped a pill into his outstretched hand. After she left, Carl sat on the edge of the bed with the pill clutched tightly in his hand. Then he fumbled with the drawer of his bedstead, removed an envelope, and put the pill carefully into it. He glanced up suddenly and looked at Larry. "Well," he said.

Larry stared back at him. "Are you saving it Carl? What for?"

Carl looked at him with his sorrowful eyes. "I can't tell you."

"You could only be saving sleeping pills for one reason."

Carl said, "Will you promise not to tell?"

"I can't promise anything."

Carl walked over to Larry's bed. "Larry, listen. I can't take hospitals any longer. The doc told me today that that specialist was held up. Anyway, he won't make any difference. I can't go back to my family. I'm nothing but trouble to them."

Larry said, "Why sleeping pills? How many does it take?"

"Other ways are too messy. I just want to go to sleep and die. All I need is ten—no more, no less—that's what somebody told me. And if I go here, the family will think that it's almost a natural death."

"It will take you a long time to get ten," Larry said. "Mrs. Carten is the only nurse who doesn't stand over you while you take medications, and she is only on this floor about every third night.

"I can wait. You won't tell, will you?"

"I don't know. I'm sure it's not right." Larry looked anxiously up at Carl. "How many pills have you?"

"Two."

Mrs. Carten came in. "Lights out, boys." She snapped off the light.

All that night Larry thought of Carl's determination to die, and he wondered if he should tell, but then it wasn't any of his business—or was it?

When the doctor came the next morning, Larry attempted to form the words that would expose Carl, but he was conscious of Carl's intent stare, and with a sense of guilt, he said only, "Doctor, another week and my month is up."

"Is it?" Already?"

"Yes. I will be able to get up then, won't I?"

The doctor patted him on the head. "Now, son, we'll have to wait until then and see. We can't rush things." He smiled and left.

During the morning Larry thought again and again of the doctor's mild little smile and his gentle pat. He remembered, too, that Mrs. Carten had not visited him, and his irritation grew. When his lunch was brought in, he said it was cold, and refused to eat it. And his mind insisted, "I better be up next week.

When he felt Carl's eyes studying him, he remembered the conversation

of the night before. It snapped his thoughts away from himself, and he stared sullenly across at Carl. Carl, finally, stretched out on his back and blew smoke rings at the ceiling.

The next day was almost the same. And the next. There was the same pat on the head, and the same evasive answers. He was tired of studying grammar, tired of reading, tired of thinking. And Mrs. Carten had not been in to see him in the mornings.

When she came that night with the medications, she gave Carl his first. He clutched it in his hand. And then she came over to Larry.

"I haven't seen you in days." she said. "I'm telling you more babies have been born these last few nights. Run, run, run, that's all I did. I was so tired that I just went hame and dropped. Say, did you miss me?"

"Not particularly," he said.

She looked at him, a little startled, then she turned off the light and left. Larry heard Carl fumbling in his bedstand drawer.

"Three," Larry said. But he received no answer. "Three," he said again.

When the doctor came the next day, Larry was determined to get a direct answer. "Doctor," he said, "my month is up. Now, how about it."

"Well, Larry, you're coming along fine. But we have to be sure, you know. It will take a while longer, say two weeks, maybe three. We just can't take chances with that heart."

After the doctor left, Larry thought of a thousand things he should have said. He should have told him how his back was beginning to burn, especially at the end of his spine. He should have told him about the cold breakfasts, and that the nurse usually bathed him with cool water. And those damn noises out in the corridor. Somebody was always breaking something.

When he picked up his Spanish grammar, he looked at it with disgust and threw it aside. The complaints he would make to the doctor the following morning kept piling up in his mind.

When Lois came that night, breathless as usual, he looked at her bright face with open irritation.

"It took you long enough to get here," he said.

She smoothed back her short blonde hair with nervous fingers. "But, Larry, you know I have a job."

He turned his eyes away from her and looked down at the foot of the bed.

"Is something worrying you, Larry?"

She sat down on the edge of the bed and clasped his limp hand. He looked back at her and forced a smile.

"That's better," she said. She held his hand tighter and smiled down at him. "I suppose you want all the news about the office. Well, business is booming. There are two more clerks in the accounting department. And you remember that little Mr. Moorehead? He's going to New York . . ."

Larry pushed himself up on his elbows. "What is he going to New York for?"

"Don't get excited," she laughed. "It's that export job, but the boss said that he had something lined up for you."

"Oh, yeah," Larry said.

"But, Larry . . ."

He was not listening. He sank back on the pillows. His lips were pulled into a straight line, and his eyes showed his anger. She talked on. He ignored her, but after she kissed him and left, he lay there and thought of her young beauty, her strong body, and he felt tired and old.

In the darkness of the night Carl's scheme closed in on him, and he thought how odd it was that in his hands he held another man's life. He had the power to say whether or not this man should live.

In the morning Mrs. Carten came to see him. She stretched out in the chair and lit a cigarette. With a sudden shock he noticed that she had a faint moustache, and that tiny droplets of sweat glistened on the thin bristles. Funny he had not noticed it before. He shuddered and turned his eyes away.

Mrs. Carten watched him. Then she stammered, blushed a brilliant red, and left. He was glad that she had gone. Her stories were becoming disgusting.

Now, in the long days he no longer thought of books, nor dreamed of walking down the corridor and out into the soft, fresh air. The drama of the room consumed his mind. He thought only of Carl's plan for death, and the role he, himself, played.

Carl's attacks—the bubbling saliva, the frenzied moans—had become revolting. To relieve his disgust he played a game. Would Mrs. Carten appear every third night? And should he tell now, wait for a while, or should he tell at all? Carl had five pills in his secret hoard.

The night of the fifth pill, as Larry dozed, a pain tore at his chest. He opened his eyes and stared wildly into the blackness. "Oh, no," he said. Hungry claws dug into his heart. It swelled in agony until it filled his chest, and then the pain dragged him down into darkness.

When he opened his heavy eyelids, he looked up through the window of an oxygen tent. Mrs. Carten's red face looked down at him. "My, you did give us a scare," her lips said. He hated her.

He lay for days, listless, not daring to think. The oxygen tent was taken away, and the routine of the hospital moved close to his bed. The doctor patted him. A nurse bathed him. Food was placed in front of him and was taken away. The noises from the corridor lay heavy about him.

One night when Mrs. Carten brought around the medications, his apathy slipped away. . As she handed Carl his pill, Larry reached for his water jug. It was empty, and he crashed it on the floor.

Mrs. Carten turned quickly. "Why did you do that? Don't be a baby, Larry."

He snapped, "Don't call me a baby, you bitch."

She cleaned up the broken glass and brought him fresh water. After she left, Larry stared for a moment at Carl. Finally he said, "How many pills have you?"

"That isn't any of your business."

"Isn't it? I'll ask the nurse—"

Carl jumped up from his bed. "I have five."

"I don't believe you. Bring them over."

Carl hesitated, but brought the envelope to him. Larry counted them. There were seven.

"Put them in my drawer," Larry said.

"Your drawer?"

"Yes. Don't worry, I'm not going to use your precious pills. I'm just making sure that you don't pull a sneaker on me."

Carl put them into the drawer and returned to his bed. Mrs. Carten came in and turned off the light.

Larry called out into the darkness, "Remember, I sleep light."

There was no answer, and Larry was left in the night with his thoughts. He had new thoughts. He had hate. Imagine Mrs. Carten, hairy-lipped Carten, calling him a baby! She had no respect for his illness. But he would get even with her.

And there was pop-eyed Carl over there in the other bed. Larry thought, "I'll bet he prayed that I would die, so he would have clear sailing. The damn coward, lying over there, smug and content with his plan to escape his miserable little headaches. But I can dangle him, and then shatter his little scheme." A sudden thought delighted him—"But what if he does die, and there is an investigation? Where did he acquire the pills? Why, Mrs. Carten of course! She was the only nurse who was careless with medications." He pictured her shocked, stupid expression as she faced her accusers. These thoughts consumed the night.

The days went slowly by. There were eight pills, nine pills. Larry was irritable and cross. He could not tolerate his smirking doctor. He swore at a nurse and twice threw his dinner on the floor. The whole hospital seemed to be concerned with petty details, and unaware of the needs of the patients. His mattress was lumpy, the food was tasteless, the room was cold, he was a sick man, but they, the hospital staff, just made rackets out in the corridor.

When Lois came, he told her not to come back, and he told the nurse not to allow her to visit him again. Her visits had become intolerable. She talked constantly about the office, bragged about swimming parties, showed off her vitality. It was too much.

Carl and he never spoke, but often they would stare across the room at each other.

Larry lay in bed and weighed his hatred. Which one did he despise the more? He weighed Mrs. Carten's hairy lip against Carl's dirty saliva. He

added and subtracted, kept mental accounts. Which would give the most satisfaction? He had to know. Time was short.

It was ten o'clock, and Mrs. Carten came rushing in with the medications. She handed Larry his medicine and glanced away. He stared at her beefy face, and when she turned towards Carl, he studied her lumpy back.

She handed Carl his pill. The tenth pill. She snapped out the light and left.

Larry could make out Carl's shadowy figure standing by his bed.

"Can I have my pills?"

"I haven't made up my mind."

"Give me my pills."

Larry yawned. "You're beginning to bore me."

Carl said softly, "You know, I could easily drag you out of that bed and shake you until you died. Give me those pills."

"You haven't the guts."

There was a long silence, and Larry put his hand around the signal cord.

"Please give me the pills?"

"Maybe."

There was another pause. Larry broke the silence: "O.K., I'll give them to you, but maybe as soon as you take them, I will call the nurse. Yes. maybe I will do it that way—go ahead, take the pills."

He heard Carl rustling in the drawer, the crackling of the envelope. He heard Carl stumble across the room, the pouring of water, a long sigh, the rustle of a bed, and he called out, "Good night, Carl "

There was no answer, and he lay in bed with the signal cord clutched in his hand. He thought, and thought, but he could not make up his mind.

Now and then, long sighs, a murmur, penetrated the darkness, and he stared toward Carl's bed. A clock ticked, and soon that was the only sound. It ticked and ticked and ruled the room. It ticked, and there was the shuffle of feet in the corridor. Mrs. Carten was making her rounds. She came in, holding a flashlight and stood by Larry's bed.

He said, "What the hell do you want?"

She said something inaudible and hurried out of the room. The clock went on ticking. Greyness filled the room. Larry could see Carl's bed. A stiff form lay under a blanket. He called, "Carl—Carl—Carl—" but he knew, and he said to himself, "He's gone. He's dead."

He lay there, and the signal cord was heavy in his hand. He had to catch Mrs. Carten before she went off shift. He would tell her that he had called Carl but received no answer. And then he would lie back and watch her red face sweat with shock.

He pulled the cord. When he heard the slow shuffle of feet coming down the corridor, he looked at the bed across from him, he tried to visualize, to whet his appetite, for the scene that soon would be enacted. But the bed,

stretching out there, white, and now strangely lumpy, touched him only with its loneliness.

He listened to the shuffling feet—so near now—but the promised pleasure did not creep through his body. He strained for it, but it faded away into the greyness. Again he looked at the bed across from him. He glanced away and looked at the wall—so near he could touch it. He heard the door knob turn, and he closed his eyes.

And then he thought he felt his heart pain. It was beating rapidly. His mind, sharpened by this suspicion of pain, unrelentingly pushed his thoughts down toward his heart. Carl's death, Mrs. Carten's guilt did not concern him now. He waited for a sudden twinge, and he knew that he had only one thought left, one thought that he could no longer postpone, nor avoid.

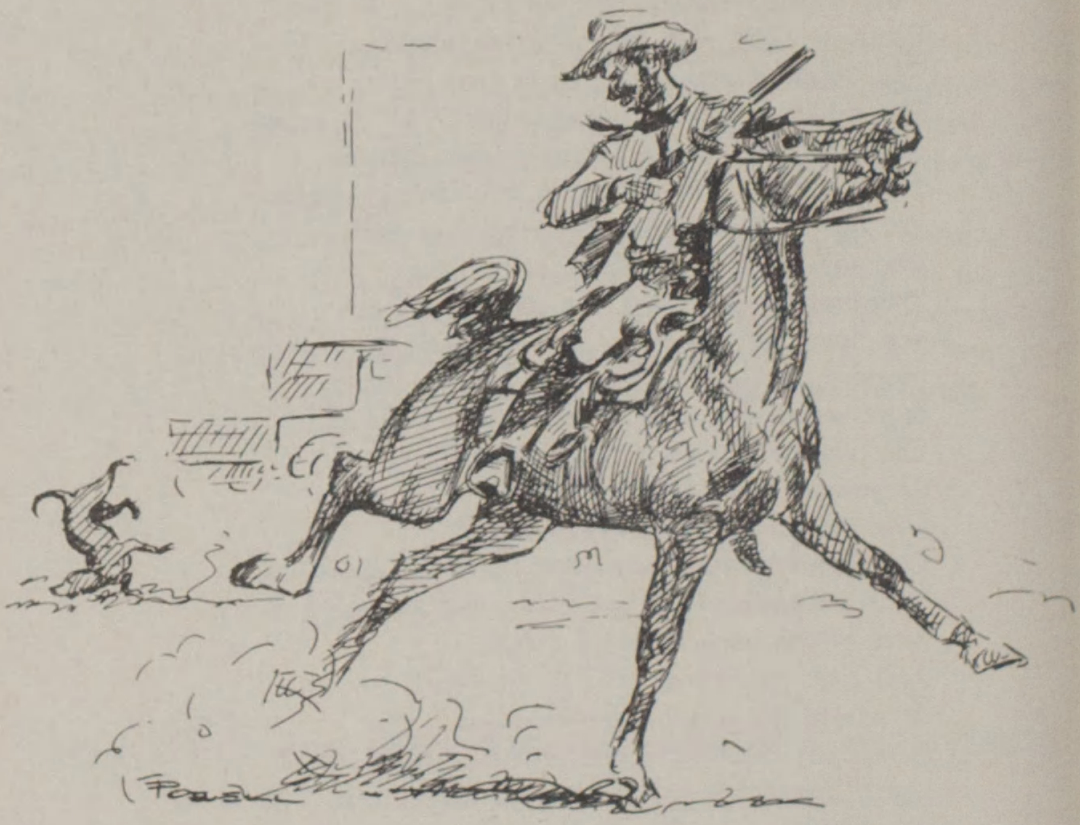
An Address to the Minor Poets of New Sparta

(To be delivered in a false beard to an assembly of the damned)

By ROBERT TAYLOR

Poets?
Somewhere between this pathos and bathos,
This vacuum cant and this turning within,
Is there something more than mewling,
The swish of maggots in decayed brains?
Why our mother's milk was tinged with absinthe war;
We were suckled on tales of running wounds
And putrescence taught us lies to sound like truth.
Now plasm dulls the earth and the cracked sky
Prepares to drown us in our own unconscious crimes;
Far beyond our words, our death sucks sticky fingers.
But where is the poet when the empty eyes
Eat stars and pluck us by the hair?
Why he laments, he writes an elegy—
A villanelle for cats and hedgehogs newly dead.
He strikes a theme for successful contraception,
And celebrates his lady's tilting breasts,
And sips his tea in the tepid afternoon.
Ah, his eyes and nose are polite, a glow
Of cool air on his pallid cheeks, the dreamed emaciation,

The poet IN VACUO, do not disturb, he is dead.
I am angry, I would lead the angels in revolt,
Drunk as God with anger at the small,
The beggars and the emigres from man,
The panders and the swag-bellied tarts of peace.
In the market, in the money-striped bazaar,
The plumber's spittle is worth more than a poem.
We have left invective for a chaos in despair.
We never live, but simper in our cells,
Worshipping gods that are all feet, all tail.
We have left humanity, and we shall pay, shall pay
In more than sterile vigils and vacant stares.
But I would not urge democracy, o dear catchalls;
Our history demands the ephorate.
Alexander Hamilton, the noble,
Most pragmatic Roman of them all,
Coriolanus in the Convention, lacking experience
With Jefferson's bold peasantry and mechanic race,
Said of the people—those swine!
And even penurious old Ben Franklin,
A man of the people, provincial,
A myopic soul who found judiciousness in Pope,
Used "common" with a most patrician tone.
The people, Carl Sandburg, yes?
The people, no! Better to hear Dario,
Criolla America's voice of pride—
YO NO SOY UN POETA PARA MUCHEDUMBRES—
Or Jeffers in his more inhuman moments.
But that we cannot reach them an excuse?
Are we no-fault as well as not-word?
Is it not-sad that we must suffer
Exclusion even from life?
Our dry-leaf minds flutter in the sun,
Yet remain cold, dangling in the elements of pity.
But fold your hands, little poets, fold your hands,
Angers do not last long, do not disturb the empyreal;
We cannot fall far when we are crawling on the ground.



The Windmill

By LARRY KADLEC

ILLUSTRATED BY ACE POWELL

Verne Wells, the hunter, drove his dusty pickup down the main street of Willow Springs. He pulled up in front of a weathered brown saloon with a huge neon light that said, "The Club Lounge." The late Saturday afternoon street was almost deserted, it being too early for the ranch people to come to town. A few loafers in front of the bar curiously looked up as he stopped the pickup and slid out of it. Two dogs jumped out behind him. He stooped quickly and grabbed one of the hounds by the scruff of the neck. Then he released the animal and straightened. "Stay here!" he snapped. He walked up the concrete steps to the saloon nodding curtly to the loafers as he headed for the door. As he stepped in the door a man bumped into him knocking him back against the door's frame. "Watch where you're going goddam you!" the man snapped. Wells kept his eyes from the man's face, staring at his rich purple shirt. The man walked on by him without saying anything else. Wells walked up to the bartender and tossed three pairs of

coyote ears, all attached to a string, on the bar. "I want to leave these for Frank English, please," he said.

"Sure," said the bartender.

"Tell him I got three on his range and that I will collect next time I see him." Wells fished a nickle from his pocket. "Gimme a bottle of orange." A barking dog shattered the enjoyment of his drink. He turned one ear, listening. A horse was running and suddenly there was a shot and the barking stopped. The bartender and he both ran to the door. He saw the flash of a rich purple shirt and a horse going down the street and then he saw the loafers clustered around his dog in the middle of the street. He walked up to them.

"He's dead," one of the men said. "Bennie Hazel came out of the bar and started to get on his horse. Your hound started barking. The horse shied and Hazel barely got on. Then the horse took off at a run with your dog chasing him. Hazel pulled out his rifle and shot your mutt." He stopped and stared expectantly at Wells. The bartender said, "You got no beef, Wells, the dog had it coming. Anybody would have done the same thing." The men nodded their heads in agreement. Wells eyes passed over them for a second. Then without a word, he bent and picked up the dog and carried him to his pickup. He called the other dog, looked back at the cluster of men again and drove off

Incidents like this were commonplace in the Valley of the Little Buffalo. Verne Wells' hound was forgotten. He had a lot of hounds. And then fall came to the Little Buffalo.

Wells put the pickup in second gear and plowed down the ridge into the sand. It was too dark to see where he was going so he just headed east toward the pink line of the rising sun. He had left the last road about twenty minutes before and crossing that ridgemeant that he was now in one hundred and sixty-five square miles of sand, chokecherry trees, and scrub brush—The Hazel D-W ranch. He stopped the pickup at the bottom of the ridge before the D-W fence. He got out of the pickup and started pulling the staples on two adjacent fenceposts with a hammer. The strands of barbwire sagged loosely and Wells walked back to the pickup and got two short heavy iron bars. He put one on top of the wires by one post and repeated the procedure at the other post The wires were neatly pinned to the ground as he got in the pickup and drove across. He put the bars back and using the same staples he had pulled, he tacked the wires lightly back in place. The tire tracks didn't worry him. The wind would take care of them in a few hours. The sun was almost fully up now and Wells knew exactly where he was. He didn't spend much time finding a trail which he drove parallel to. He didn't want to get too close to grass or the hardpacked trail as his tire tracks would be more likely to remain in such places. Presently he came to a small valley with a towering cold grey windmill clanking monotonously in its bottom. Wells drove into hte valley and up a brush filled gully. He parked the pickup

under two chokecherry trees and piled brush around it. Then he got his rope out of the pickup and walked down to the windmill. There was some riding stock there and a few head of cattle. He sat on the edge of the water trough and rolled a cigarette. His cold black eyes roved over the stock until he saw the horse he wanted, Bennie Hazel's favorite, the one he had been riding when he killed Wells' dog. He sat patiently until the horse came up to drink and then his hand whipped out throwing the noose. The horse shied back and Wells cursed softly. He snaked out the loop again and made his throw. The horse wheeled and ran back against a vertical bluff. Wells walked back to the pickup and opened the back. The eight hounds piled out, whining and nervous. Wells walked down to the windmill again with the dogs. The cattle stood with dull eyes watching him and the horses were bunched up together, with the exception of Hazel's horse which still stood by the cliff. Wells caught his lead dog by the throat and pointed to the horse. "Bay him." The dog tore across the sand with the others behind her. None of them gave voice. They were well selected for their job. The horse turned toward the open side of the valley but two dogs cut in ahead of him. He wheeled about and tried to climb the sand cliff but he slid back. He stood quivering while the dogs kept a respectful distance, growling and whining. Wells strode over to the dogs. His loop whipped out around the horse's head and he called the dogs back. He lead the horse up to the pickup and tied him. Then he took his saddle from the back of the pickup and slammed it down on the horse's back with all his strength. The horse staggered but could hardly move as he was tied so closely. Wells bridled him and slipped a rifle into the saddle scabbard. Then he rode down and caught another horse. He fastened a rough bridle over the horse's head and tied them both to the windmill. He then climbed up the windmill to below the fan, where he tampered for a few minutes with a small crescent wrench. The fan stopped turning and Wells left the wrench there along with a greasegun which he had pulled from his pocket and had pumped carefully around the platform. He went down the ladder grinning. Then calling his dogs he mounted up and led the other horse up a hill. It wasn't too far to the weather beaten barns, outhouses, and main house of the D-W. Wells tied the horses to some brush and crept up behind an outcropping of rock. He pushed his rifle over the rock and looked down on the ranch Bennie's car wasn't there as he had suspected. It was too early in the morning. Bennie was no doubt sleeping it off in the car somewhere and it would be some time before he came home. His eyes went over the ranchyard carefully. There was no one else there. He had been quite sure Hazel was the only one left on the run down spread. He got the horses and dogs and went on down to the ranch house. He tied the horses behind the house where they couldn't be seen from the road if Bennie came home soon. He opened the door to the house and sneered at its disarray. Then he treaded his way through the mess until he had located Bennie's working saddle and his rifle. He carried them out to the horses where he stripped his own saddle

from Bennie's horse, put it on the other one and put Bennie's saddle on Bennie's horse. Next he crossed to the outhouses and prowled about until he found Bennie's old truck. He removed a crescent wrench and a grease gun, looking with disdain at the dirt mixed with the grease. He took some waste and cleaned the grease gun and then put them both in his saddle bags. He heard Bennie's car coming as he closed the saddle bags and he pulled his rifle out of its scabbard and levered a shell into the chamber. Crouching behind an old rain barrel he watched Bennie open the gate and drive the car through. Bennie drove up to the ranch house and got out of the car. Wells straightened up with the rifle pointed from his waist. "Hazel!" he snapped. Bennie Hazel turned with bleary eyed wonder and stared at him. "Your windmill ain't working Hazel. Lets us go fix it." Hazel opened his mouth and then shut it. He started across the yard looking back at Wells. Wells swung up in the saddle and slowly slid his gun back into the scabbard. Hazel turned and ran for a corral next to a large barn.

"Turn him!" barked Wells, and the dogs sped after him. The lead dog followed by two others cut in front of Hazel and whirrled towards him. He twisted to the left and sprinted off again but the dogs were all around him and closing in. "Call them off!" he yelled. Wells whistled the dogs back.

"I know your game," Bennie screamed, "You're going to have them kill me."

"No I ain't Hazel, I just want to show you how smart they are. It's a real shame to lose one." Bennie shuddered in relief.

"What are you going to do then? What have you got my horse saddled up for?" Wells smiled grimly at him.

"I told you we were going to fix the windmill. Then I thought you might want to take a little trip up to see Manitou. You wouldn't want to go without your horse would you? Such a valuable horse too. Wouldn't be fitting to visit Manitou without this horse." Bennie stared at him.

"Who's Manitou?"

"Maybe you find out Bennie."

The rest of the trip to the windmill was made in complete silence. Bennie tramped along in the sand, occasionally looking back at Wells who would grin and nod his head on in the direction of the windmill. Finally they reached the valley and Bennie turned and said, "It ain't working."

"That's what I told you Bennie; go on up and fix it, it's probably a loose fan." Bennie had reached the eighth rung when he turned and said, "I haven't any tools."

"There's a wrench and a grease gun up on the platform Bennie." Bennie climbed a few more rungs, turned and said, "How do you know?"

"Keep climbing Bennie," said Wells. Bennie reached the platform below the fan, saw the wrench and grease gun and looked down at Wells with a dead-white face. Wells was sitting the horse with his rifle across the saddle. Wells started lifting the gun to his shoulder.

"Fix it Bennie!" he screamed, his face twisted with hate. Bennie turned with the wrench and set the blades whirling against the wind again. The windmill started its clank once more.

"Stand up Hazel, or I'll kill you," he shouted against the noise of the windmill. Bennie got slowly to his feet, numb with fear. The rifle was pointed straight at his chest. "Now keep on standing there. I'm going to tell you why you're up there. You shot my dog, Hazel. I've got your horse here, saddled with your saddle, with your rifle in the scabbard. I'm going to tie him to the windmill where he can't get water. I'm going to tie him tight. Up on the platform I've left a wrench and a grease gun of my own, and I've replaced mine with yours. I even left the toolcase in your truck open. Do you get it yet? I'm leaving here and there will be no tracks behind me. Then I'm going to cross over on the Reservation and run a few coyotes which I will take back to Willow Springs tomorrow. Do you see it? Do you know what's going to happen to you?" Wells screamed the last sentence at him as he raised the rifle once more. Hazel stepped back, bumping his shoulder against the stabilizer bar coming out from the fan. His foot slipped on some of the grease which Wells had methodically scattered from the grease gun. He rolled off the platform, caught on with one hand, hung for a second, and then dropped downward with a screech. His body cracked against a bar on the gray tower, careened off it and smashed against the water trough. He bounced up and fell face downward on the hard packed sand. One of Well's dogs whined. Wells grinned and rolled a cigarette. Then he tied Bennie's horse on the far side of the tower. He unsaddled the other horse and put the saddle and dogs back in the pickup. He removed the brush from around the pickup and headed back in the same, but now faint tracks that he had come in. The wind was beginning to blow quite hard.

I never saw a Purple Cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one.
Gelett Burgess

Variations on Purple Cows

By ROBERT TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATED BY JAMES DEW, ART INSTRUCTOR

MY LAST PURPLE COW

R. Browning

Ah, there you have it! There, upon the wall!
'God's blood and death, Guiseppi, mark it well.
Will't please you to look close? Stare and blow
And puff your cheeks amazed, and yet I think
I am not mad—not yet at any rate.
I swear upon my knife, ' tis true, ah yes,
The Spring would verify my thought—alas
'Tis Winter yet. 'Twas painted by Guido
Who never painted other quite so well
As this. Hah! You stare at me, and yet I tell
I loved her, sir, and in my mind she grew;
I pined and thought this only could appease
My vicious appetite, and, ah, it did.
When, after years of this alone,
This daub, while wand'ring through a wood,
I saw one, sir, a purple cow, and I
Drew my knife and cut her throat; I stained
The purple with a cloud of red, Guiseppi.
Ah, the rose is sweeter in the mind
That clothed in thorns, and so with purple cows.
But there it hangs, Guiseppi, on the wall,
Guido's masterpiece, a rarity at least,
But at the most, my friend, a work of art.

LA BELLE COW SANS MERCI

J. Keats

Ah, what can ail thee, scholar faint,
Alone and ghastly shuddering;
The cold hath frozen the water pipes
And no birds sing.

I see a lily in thy hand,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
As though thou wert some Oscar Wilde.
What aileth you?

I met a cow upon the meads
Full beautiful, a faery's cow;
Her tail was long, her breath was sweet,
And broad her brow.

Yet was I soon set fast amazed;
We walked into the sunlight,
And there I saw her purple hide.
What heart fright!

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and ghastly shuddering;
Though cold hath frozen the water pipes
And no birds sing.

AN ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY

The Earl of Oxford (sometimes called W. Shakespeare, John Webster, Francis Bacon, and David the Psalmist)

Scene: Duncanfife at sunset. The King alone.

King: At last the dark. Three nights I have not slept
For hearing savage voices in mine ear.
They made no sense, yet they have three times
Clarioned into my sleeping mind some hint
Of dread. Three times the sound, the sybil's voice
Or voices shouted: "Henri, thou shalt die!
But not until the coming of the cow
All purple died."

I know not what they mean
For where in all the world a purple cow?
Hark! Who goes? Ah, my brother Ferdinand
Brings greeting with the dawn. What news,
My brother?

Ferd: Your majesty, my brother, I bear a gift
From the Indies, a thing most strange and new;
A messenger just brought the thing from Spain.
Here, I'll open it. Why look, my brother.

King: A cow! The skin, the hide of a cow!
So soon, ye gods, is this foul thing to pass?
But wait, it is not purple, but of white.

Ferd: Pretty, what? But note, my brother Lord,
How the setting sun glances on the fur
And makes it seem—well, crimson and yet
Not so crimson as—well, purple. Why, my Lord,
Your face is pale. Wait, I have another gift.

King: A sword, a naked sword, O guards come quick!
Treason! Help! Ye gods, I am run through. (dies.)

Ferd: (covering the body with the cow hide)
Tomorrow's dawn shall see me King of France,
King of the future, king of many lands.

(Exuent)

SONG OF THE PURPLE COW

W. Whitman

You, purple cow, blush, impeturbe in nature,
The world before you, I sing you and I celebrate you.
Henceforth I shall not ask for good fortune, I shall not whimper,
Henceforth I am one with you, strong men and fertile women
One with you, breaking the earth if it need breaking,
Leaving it be if it needs that also.
I am the Answerer.
You are the purple cow.
Out of the Cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the Cradle, endlessly seasick.
Out of the dark in a twelfth night flooding,
We two electric in nature,
Joining the phallic procession, forever comrades,
Allons! Allons!

---

who is a purple cow

e. e. cummings

Purple is more quick than thick desire.
Bo
vine.
And drowned in can't's of won't,
has was in wants much sanely

economically i u
in purple
bo
vine
forget-me-nots?

Behind the Walls of Osaka Jo

By JOSEPH E. L. GIONET
ILLUSTRATED BY NANCY FIELDS

Osaka Jo, built in 1583, is the castle of Hideyoshi, the conqueror. It was occupied by American troops after the capitulation of Japan in 1945. Hideyoshi's magnificent palace, protected by two moats and massive battlements, has been reconstructed on its original foundation in this century after it had been believed "jinxed" because of its three violent destructions. The swooping roofs of the palace rise above he massive defenses and dominate the city and the plain.

Most of the men had gone to town for the evening and it was quiet on my post at the gate until I heard a vehicle coming across the moat. I slung my carbine and stood to halt the peep. As it came to a slow halt in front of me, I saluted Captain Walton sitting by the driver. About thirty-two, I'd say, with a thin mustache, the captain always looked either bored or angry. He was angry now because I should have recognized him and passed him on with a snappy highball.

The captain dismounted, walked past me looking the area over with a sharp inspection eye. I could see that I was in for it. In the shadow by the wall he spotted a copy of STARS AND STRIPES. He looked at me as if he'd found a body with my knife in its throat.

He snapped, "This post should be policed at all times, Private."

Then he went into the guard shack and I followed him in. He saw some C-rations on the shelf and a coffee pot on the stove.

"You men take the privilege of having your private kitchen?" he asked in his smooth way.

I told him no but we liked to have coffee and a little snack once in a while, especially on the early morning reliefs when the kitchen was locked up.

"Not satisfied with coffee?" he said, and not waiting for an answer, "wherever men have food they make a mess. Get this food out of here."

I said yes, sir, and saluted him. He mounted and the peep rolled off into the castle grounds. As it rolled by, in the rear I noticed a full case of Jap whiskey.

That was the first time an officer had bitched about our shack. They usually stayed out of the shack and our quarters. We handled our detail pretty efficiently and saved them a lot of trouble. Walton was different. He didn't like us, and we didn't like him. He was something in Battalion and the colonel had put him in charge of the guard when it was formed. He didn't do much. Now and then he'd send changes in orders to the sergeant of the guard. That was about all. But if anybody was ever chicken, it was Walton. There was a rumor that his wife, back in the states, wanted a divorce.

In spite of him, guard duty wasn't so bad at Osaka Jo. In fact, I think it was the best racket I ever had. Not bad at all. Two days on and one off at two four-hour reliefs a day. Not bad. But I didn't get on a racket like that

because anybody liked me. No. It was just to get me and some other guys like me out of the way.

A bunch of us didn't really belong in that outfit. We didn't feel at home and the regular men didn't seem to like to have us around. They were engineers. Mostly, they did heavy construction jobs. We'd got in the outfit back in France. We were guys who'd been reclassified to non-combatant duty and were assigned to this outfit where everything was safe and cozy. We'd been in all kinds of combat outfits: infantry, tanks, artillery, and such. Some had got hit, some sick, but not bad enough to be sent back to the States. Some had gone psycho but had snapped out of it. Well, anyway, machine-gunning and patrolling don't help you handle a hammer and saw. You needed a trade in this outfit.

When the outfit was shipped to Japan, the colonel got a brain storm. By having some of us volunteer for steady guard, he could get us out of the way and leave the men with a trade on the job every day. That pleased everybody. After that the colonel was a pretty good Joe. We got a good racket out of it. We got out of standing formations—chow when we wanted it—our own quarters apart from the rest of the outfit—no officers to bother us. Officers on O. D. usually minded their own business.

That night I was on the eight to twelve relief at the gate. It was October and the night was clear, the stars were out, and there was a soft, warm freshness in the air. There wasn't much going on. Now and then a vehicle would come in or out. The boys wouldn't be back from the cabarets and the other places till about eleven o'clock. I leaned my carbine against the wall of the shack and sat down on the bench.

Beyond the gate, where the road came in on a bridge across the moat, all was dark. In the daytime the moat was broad and deep with green, mossy water in the bottom, but now it was just a big, black pit. The electric light on one side of the gate left the wall in darkness and cast more shadow than light on the higher inner wall of the square area through which the road led to the large gate of the inner wall. From where I sat in front of the guard shack, the inner gateway looked larger than ever with its open gates of heavy timber reinforced with weather beaten iron. Its swooping roof hung high above the road. These old walls that defended the square were made of blocks of stone as large as medium tanks. And above the walls was the sky.

As I was sitting there looking at the walls and the sky, I hardly heard the footsteps coming from the inner gate. I stood up and saw the shadow of a man coming. As he came through the gate I saw a little flash at his hip and relaxed It was the corporal. The light had flashed from the silver SS troopers' skull and crossbones insignia fixed on the flap of his holster. There was a beautiful German P-38 in that black holster. How he'd got it and the insignia I don't know because, although the men were curious, no one ever asked him. He'd been in the Tenth Armored Division, my old outfit, too. But

we'd been in different battalions of armored infantry. Maybe that's why we got along so well. Besides his own relief, he was acting sergeant of the guard on account of Smith had gone home. I watched him as he walked into the light and came toward me. A little taller than me, he had a good set of shoulders, not heavy but they looked as if they's been cut to fit the combat jacket he was wearing. He always walked as if an officer was watching him but when you looked close you could see that he was relaxed. It always puzzled me how he could look at attention and at ease at the same time. On his jacket, he wore the Purple Heart, the Infantry Badge and the patch of the Tenth Armored. The pistol belt was buckled low across his hips, below the waist of his jacket, where it didn't bother with breathing. Not cowboy style, but level and secure.

"How's it going, Joe?" he asked as he got to me.

I told him not bad, I'd just been enjoying the scenery.

"It is a nice evening," he said as he tipped back his helmet liner. I offered him a cigarette. As we lit up the mercenary in me made me think of the ten cents it was worth in the dark alley leading into the walled city. Well, a guy's got to smoke. Then we sat down on the bench.

"Have to watch it tonight," he said. "The colonel left this after for Kyoto. He'll be there two days at Regiment. Leaves Captain Walton in charge."

I said that wasn't good and I told him about Walton's visit. The corporal didn't say anything right away. He looked worried. Then he said, not angry but as if he was thinking, "That son of a bitch is getting more G. I. every day."

I asked him was there anything we could do about him.

"Not much, I guess," he said. "He's got the rank and he's taking advantage of it. As long as he stays within his authority he's got us by the tail and pulling down hill. We need rank in this man's army but guys like him spoil it."

That's right, I said. It's not the army, just the people in it. But there must be something we could do.

"As long as he's within his authority, we're stuck," he said. "And even then, bucking a captain is rough. But I'll tell you what. He'll probably forget about the rations. So let it ride. If he brings it up again, tell him that you told me about it. That's all you're expected to do."

I asked if he wasn't sticking his neck out.

"If he says anything, I'll have to see the colonel. Walton will be mad as hell if I go over his head but the colonel is all right. I think that's why Walton is being the bastard he is. The colonel really handles this detail. Walton just passes his orders down. That's what gets him mad. He can't really run the outfit so he does his best to make us hurt. One of the clerks in Battalion told me that this is a sort of pet for the colonel. Original idea of his and it tickles him because it's working and helping the old boy scoop up that Meritorious Service Award for the Battalion. I'll have to take a chance on the colonel. But, still, it's pretty risky—Walton's the colonel's right hand man."

I said it was sure was risky. Walton was always on the spot to talk to the colonel first.

"By the way," he said. "Been drinking, Joe?"

I was dry as a bone, I said.

'God! I wish Bukofsky was. He's drunk as a hoot owl. Good thing I checked on him at the building. Changed him with Foss at the rear gate. Nobody ever goes that way."

Bukofsky was a good man, I told him. Too bad he was hitting the bottle and the girls at Imazato so hard.

"Well, what can you expect? The poor bastard was blown half way to hell on the Moselle. Concussion and shrapnel don't make angels. But he wasn't so bad until Walton got on his tail. His points will be coming up in a few weeks. I'll be glad to see him go."

He got up, pulling his tailored jacket down around the waist. He went around the shadowed side of the shack.

"Ought to be more careful with these beer bottles." he said. "They're out in plain sight."

I was sorry, I told him. I should have checked when I came on. I heard the clinking of the bottles as he put them in the cabinet we had nailed on the wall of the shack.

"Sure is well stocked," he said from the shadows. "Hope Walton never gets a notion to look here. If he ever steps around this corner, put a full clip in that carbine and cut him down." He gave his low laugh that came from down in his stomach.

Then he came back and went into the shack and opened a couple of drawers. "Getting low on pro-kits," he said. "I'll get some from supply in the morning." Keeping pro-kits there was one of his ideas, and I told him that by God, if we didn't keep them handy where guys could run over from the park, half the outfit would be on sick call.

Just then a weapons carrier came over the moat and I halted it. Staff Sergeant Black, Walton's dog robber, was in the cab. He was a heavy man with curly hair and a mustache copied from Walton's. He was one of those G. I. racketeers.

"Hello, Joey boy," he said with his phony grin. "How's the guard?"

I said it wasn't bad and I waved him through. He was one guy I didn't care to speak to. Treated me all right but that was just because he knew it was handy at times to have a friend on the guard. I didn't like that "Joey boy" either.

The driver threw her into gear and started off. Just then the corporal ran along aside the cab and snapped, "Hold it!"

"What's the matter?" Black asked.

The corporal didn't answer. He was already at the rear of the vehicle with his flashlight in his hand. He unlatched the tarp flap and flashed the light into the body of the truck.

"Okay, Michiko," he said and he threw the flap wide open. "Out you come. Come on."

I heard the voices of Jap girls. They sounded surprised and scared. Black jumped out of the cab and ran back to the corporal. "Lay off, feller," he said.

"Regulations, Sergeant," the corporal said as he turned to face Black.

Black was roaring mad. "They're for Captain Walton. Officers' party."

"Which officers?" the corporal asked. "Walton's favored few?"

"None of your business," Black said. "You better play smart, feller. Walton's got you pretty high on his crap list now. Know that?"

"You flatter me, Sergeant," the corporal said. "I'll bet you even money I'm top man on his list. But right now, what I'm concerned with is that these girls don't get in this gate."

"You forget that I've got orders from Captain Walton," Black said with a sneer.

"You forget that I've got orders from the colonel for the guard of this castle." The corporal's voice was calm. "And if Walton doesn't like that, you can tell him this—I know he's got a babe in his quarters. A little thing I just found out today. I can't have a girl in my quarters and no other Joe in this outfit can. Orders are very clear—no officer or enlisted man is allowed to take a Japanese girl into his quarters. It would save a lot of embarrassment if she was on the other side of the moat by retreat tomorrow."

"You're looking for trouble," Black said.

"Now get these girls out of here right now," the corporal ordered him.

Black got very red in the face and stared at the corporal for a second. Then he got back into the cab and the vehicle turned in the square and went back over the moat.

The corporal and I sat down on the bench and lit up. The corporal took a long drag and blew it slowly out from his lungs.

"For God's sake," he said, "keep on your toes tonight."

He got up and hitched his belt. Then he looked at me and grinned. "Never was like this with the Tenth Armored Tigers, was it?" he said.

Tenth Armored mud and dust were like ice cream and cake compared to this chicken, I said.

"I'll be back in a while," he said and he went back into the castle grounds to check the other posts.

After he had disappeared in the darkness of the big gate, it was very quiet there on the post and I was glad the boys started to come in. A couple of men came to the gate with girls. The girls were dressed in those bright colored kimonos. They were shy and they giggled and hid in the shadows just outside the gate as the boys came in to get kits from me. They went back across the moat arm in arm and I still heard the girls giggling after they passed into the darkness.

A little later, Black's weapons carrier came back. I checked it myself this

time. He had enough nerve that he might try it again. He leaned out of the cab and got sarcastic. "Corporal's on the ball, ain't he?" he said. I said the corporal knew his business. "Tough guy, huh?" I said I thought he could handle himself. "God damned dumb doughfoots. Give them a weapon and they're the king's crap. Just 'cause he's got that God damned P-38, he thinks he's hot crap. Don't he?" I said he ought to try fiddling around the gate with Walton's .45 sometime, and, besides, the corporal was armed only on duty. I also said he should be careful how he called a doughfoot a doughfoot.

Black gave me a dirty look. His face was red and I saw no love for me there.

"Let's go," he growled to his driver. As the vehicle started off, he leaned out and said to me, "You guys are in for a lot of trouble."

I sat on the bench again. I was pretty hot under the collar myself, I guess.

Then I heard a voice from the moat bridge shout, "Corporal of the guard! Post number one! Two Panzer Regiments attacking on the left flank. Call up the battling tankers." It was Feeney, the bugler, and he sounded loaded.

I shouted back, "Let the tankers sleep in their tin cans. Two squads of armored infantry will counter-attack."

Feeney answered, "Those poor, God damned, little, mud-faced bastards! Two new squads in hell!"

Feeney staggered into the light of the gate. "Hi, Colonel!" he said. "God damn, they told me the Jerries got you." I said I hadn't heard of it.

On the bench Feeney set the barracks bag that he had been carrying slung over his shoulder. He was a little, skinny guy with a pale face and a shrapnel scar on the side of his neck. His overseas cap was cocked over his left eye and a lock of red hair hung to the other eye. His khaki shirt showed between his jacket and his loose,baggy trousers.

I asked him how it felt to be going home. "Don't feel it yet," he said. "Almost two years out of the States. Don't seem to remember what it's like."

Where had he been, I asked. "Doing some shopping," he said as he opened his barracks bag. "Look what I got my mom." He held up a black lacquer box the size of a triple-layer birthday cake. The top was beautifully decorated with a peacock in inlaid gold and ivory. It was very beautiful, I said. "Ain't it pretty, though," Feeney said, all excited. "That's gonna make Mom a swell sewing box. And look at this." He opened the box and took out a bundle. When he unfolded it, I saw it was a red silk kimono decorated with large, black and gold dragons. "That's for my kid sister," he said. "And," he went on, "this is for me." He held up a bottle of Jap whiskey. "Have a drink."

I would when I got off, I said. Walton was on the rampage and the guard was hot as a burp-gun.

"I'll play him a lullaby, the poor little son of a bitch."

That stuff must have cost a lot of yens, I said, and asked where he'd got the cash.

"Well, I'll tell you, Joe, old buddy. It's like this," he said, and then hesitated. "I got paid yesterday."

I got paid, too, I said, but I didn't have that kind of money.

"Well, I'll tell you," he went on. "I sold my rations to a Jap—cigarettes and stuff like that. (By the way, give me a butt, will you? Thanks.) And I sold an O. D. shirt, my longjohns, new boots, blankets, and a couple other things. Too heavy to lug back anyway."

Not a bad deal, I said.

Then he put his arm around my shoulder and said in a confidential tone, "You're a good buddy, Joe, I know you won't be mad. We been buddying around Rheims, Marseille, Manila, and all around. You won't be mad, huh?"

What should I be mad at, I asked.

"Well, it's like this," he said, more confidential than ever. "Course, you're my buddy. Well—well, I sold your blankets, too." Just then I called him by a good army term, I think. He pleaded, "I had to, Joe. I've been writing Mom and Sis I'd be home before Christmas and bring them something nice from Japan. And, come time, I'm almost broke. You're my buddy, ain't you?"

Feeney was a good kid. I said O. K., I didn't mind but I was glad he was going back home only once.

"You're a good buddy," he said slapping my shoulder. "Come to see me in Philly when you get back. We'll get drunk as a hoot owl. God damn! I can't believe I'm going home. But just let anybody try and stop me now."

I wished him luck and said he'd better get to the guard room and out of sight.

"O. K. Gotta blow taps," he said. "Listen to me blow taps tonight, Joe. My grand finale." He slung the bag over his shoulder and staggered off into the grounds.

A few minutes later, the corporal came back. He looked worried. I asked him was there something wrong.

"Not exactly. Not yet," he said. "Feeney's cocked to the gills. And he's got to blow taps in half an hour."

I said I'd seen him come in and I asked about Mason. Couldn't he bugle for him?

"Mason's in town," he said. "Well, Fridek will take care of Feeney till taps. He's got the next relief. He's got Feeney up in the guard room now walking him around."

I said I hoped Feeney didn't get into trouble seeing as he was leaving on points in the morning.

The corporal was tossing pebbles at the toe of his boot. He scooped up another handful of pebbles and said, "We'll get him on that truck in the morning. He's got to get out of here. This whole guard had better get back soon. They're falling apart. There's nothing in this outfit for them. They just

go on from day to day, drinking and waiting to go home." Then he looked up at me. "You know, Joe? I bet if you told any of the boys he was homesick, he'd tell you you had rocks in your head. But they are homesick. Maybe not for a home, but for the States, anyway. They don't know it, but ever since they got off the line they've been homesick. Ever since they felt the white

sheets in the hospitals. This is a dull life here. For these guys it's like drinking 'three point two' after a month drunk on Calvados."

I'd never heard him talk like that before. It set me to thinking and I figured maybe he was right. I'd never thought about it that way. Maybe I was homesick, too. Maybe the corporal was. But that was hard to believe. There was no way of telling.

Then he went on: "But to get home, they can't drop it now. A little trouble now would be bad. Why don't they hold off and then pitch a good drunk in San Francisco?"

We sat there watching the last of the boys come in from town. Most of them were quiet. Some had a hard time walking with a load of sake. A few of the new replacements came in singing and hooting.

The corporal looked at his watch. "Almost time for taps," he said. He went into the shack and I heard him ring the field phone. When he came

ut he said, "Fridek says Feeney'll be okay. He'll go up the platform with im." He checked his watch again. "Two minutes."

For the next two minutes, the corporal said nothing. He just kept checking his watch and smoking his cigarette. He sat there on the bench, his back gainst the wall, legs stretched out in front of him, fingering the insignia on is holster.

Most of the boys were in and it was very quiet. There wasn't a movement n the air. The inner gate was large and dark and as silent as it was old.

Then came the first note of taps, deep and sad. Slow. The corporal took deep drag of his cigarette and snapped the butt across the road. Tipping is helmet liner back, he looked up at the sky.

Feeney was using his trumpet tonight, I said.

"Yeah," the corporal said. "He's sure playing it sweet. Making the last ne good."

We sat there listening to Feeney's trumpet. Maybe it was the corporal's alk of home. but I felt dry in the throat. I'd never heard taps played that way. nd I guess it got me to thinking. I let myself think of a lot of things I sually didn't think of. There in the quiet of the night, Feeney's trumpet was eautiful. Feeney held the last note and let it fade away. It seemed to be lowing to the stars. I was just about to say how nice it was. I looked at the orporal. He sat like a statue. His eyes were squinted and were looking into he blackness of the big gate.

Then, clear as a bell, Feeney's trumpet sounded again. The corporal ot up heavily. "What the hell?" he said and looked puzzled. Then, grinning, e looked up at the stars. "Stardust!" he said. That's what Feeney was playing. TARDUST.

The corporal hurried around the corner of the guard shack and I followed him to the top of the wall. From there we could see the swooping oofs of the palace reaching high and silhouetted against the sky and the tars. I felt I could see Feeney on the platform under the main roof. From here he commanded the whole city nd the valley. The mournful notes of TARDUST seemed to melt in the air. Like Indian summer air. They seemed o spread over the castle and slip over the walls and float away over the oat. God! But that kid played! That trumpet sounded as if it were bleeding he notes. The kid was playing as only a heart can play. It seemed that you ouldn't breathe, that you were in a temple, a pagoda. And then it was done. ll was quiet. You'd have sworn there wasn't a living thing on earth. Just he walls and the sky and the stars.

Then I realized I was off my post. I came down from the wall and back o the gate. I turned to say something to the corporal but he wasn't there. here he was, still on the wall, just looking toward the palace. He's sure in mood, I thought. Then he saw me watching him and he came down.

"That crazy little bastard," he said. "Is he psycho? I ought to turn him n."

Then his expression changed. There was something in his look that was familiar. There was something about his eyes and his mouth. I was sure I'd seen that expression somewhere before but I couldn't place it. Then it struck me. I had seen that look on the line, on a buddy. Just a slight change of the eyes and mouth, waiting for a counter attack that was sure to come. And there was the corporal with the same look. I felt a tightness in my stomach and I caught myself waiting for the counter attack.

The corporal went into the shack and made another call on the field phone to the guard quarters. When he came out he said, "Fridek didn't know Feeney was going to play that but once the kid had started he didn't have the heart to stop him. Feeney said he felt dizzy when he finished. Then he almost fell off the platform. Fridek caught him as he was swaying. He passed out as Fridek helped him down. He's in the sack now."

Then we heard the motor of a peep coming from beyond the big gate. As the corporal stepped out to the edge of the road, that look came back on his face. He was looking toward the big gate, his eyes squinted, and his hands seemed to move by themselves as they pulled the waist of his jacket in place and shifted his pistol belt so that it was straight and tight across his hips The peep skidded around the corner and through to the big gate. The road was dry and the dust kicked up behind the peep. The headlights were full on us as it pulled up and slid to a halt, gray dust rolling up into the beam of the lights. The corporal seemed to move slowly but he was alongside the vehicle as Captain Walton dismounted. The corporal saluted and stood at attention in his easy way. Black sat grinning behind the wheel.

"What's the meaning of this, Corporal?" the captain said, his face flushed. He wasn't wearing a necktie and the collar of his khaki shirt was wrinkled. His jacket was only half buttoned. Must have had quite a party after all.

"The meaning of what, sir?" the corporal said, sort of calm and innocent.

The captain clenched his fists and shifted around so that the corporal had to face the light. He might have been better off if the corporal's face had been in shadow. The corporal's face was calm and his eyes were steady on the captain's.

"You know what," Walton snarled, and there was a note of triumph in his voice. "That bugler of yours."

"What about my bugler?"

"Listen, Corporal," Walton said. "Quit stalling. I've had enough of you and your guard. I've got a good mind to turn you in for insubordination."

The corporal's eyes shifted slowly and deliberately from the captain's flushed face to the collar of his shirt, the half buttoned jacket, and back to the captain's face. Walton's hand started up to his collar but, as if he'd changed his mind, it came back down. He shifted his feet.

"I do not understand, sir." The corporal's calm courtesy went to a point of brutality.

"What's your bugler's name?"

The corporal hesitated. Then he said, "Feeney, sir. Private first class.

"Feeney, huh? little fellow? Sometimes stands guard at the gate?"

"Yes, sir. He's also supernumerary."

"Well, Corporal," the captain said, "locate him and place him under arrest at once. I'll press charges in court-martial." He turned to leave.

Black was looking on from the peep, his moustache twisted over a self-satisfied sneer.

"I beg your pardon, sir," the corporal said, and Walton snapped about, "but Feeney's due to go back to the states on points in the morning."

Walton snapped, "He's still in the army. Carry out your orders."

The corporal drew a pro-kit from his pocket and toyed with it as if it was an unconscious gesture. Then he spoke and his voice was low and flat. "I know my orders, sir. I know all the colonel's special orders for the post—from turning in my own men to handling concubine cases."

The captain's face turned white. This is it, I thought. The corporal went on. "You're not going to court-martial Feeney, Captain Walton. Feeney is going home tomorrow. Tomorrow morning Feeney is getting on that truck to the station and within a few days he'll be aboard a troopship."

The captain didn't say anything just then. His hand started for his collar again, and again it came back to his side. I know the captain wasn't looking the corporal in the eye. He was looking the corporal over—the helmet liner beveled just above the eyes, the fitted jacket, the badge and ribbon on his breast, the oil-shiny hammer sticking out from under the holster flap, the creased trousers, the polished boots.

"Are you sure you want to court-martial Feeney, sir?" the corporal asked slowly.

Walton tried to ignore the pro-kit. He looked down at the ground and back at the corporal. "I'll let it go this time," the captain said. He knew the corporal had him over a barrel. "But watch your men, Corporal. It seems to me . . ." The corporal brought his hand up to a salute. The captain returned the salute adding, "That there's room for improvement in the efficiency of this detail."

The corporal snapped his salute off and the captain got back in his peep. Black swung the vehicle about and a trail of grey dust followed it through the big gate.

The corporal went around the corner of the shack to the cabinet and came back with two bottles of beer. He knocked off the caps on the edge of the bench and handed me a bottle.

"Here, Joe. Have a beer. The war is over—for a while, anyway."

As I took the bottle I felt his hand shake slightly. as a hand shakes replacing the half shot belt of a light thirty after an engagement.

The Valley Is Dark

By R. CYRUS NOE

Death is an equation.

Here is a procession.
It is passing through a valley
And the valley is dark.
Here is a King, whose words made men dead,
Whose acts were law
And whose proud head
Wore a sparkling crown.
Here is a Serf, whose bowed head
Looking downward saw
The Land that was never his own,
Whose words need not have been said.
Here is a Caliph, whose world was gold
And silver, in whose ear Allah
The wisdom of all things told
And asked his council.
Here is a Beggar, who sings old
Songs of alms and sorrow, who hears the caller
And bows to his trill,
Who cries for what life he is doled.

Death is an equation.

Here in the procession
through the dark valley, each is clothed in the same gray and each bears a like burden. There are no Kings or Serfs or Caliphs or Beggars here — just uniform shadows that once were men. moving through a valley.

And the valley is dark.

There's no such thing as a free lunch...

Welfare State programs now
ing offered the people of
United States will add fr
$15.9 billions to $34 billions
the federal tax burden. By
time you become taxpaying b
iness men and women, the c
will add from $17 billions to
billions to the federal tax lo
That means if you start y
career at $250 a month and
are single, your federal inco
taxes will be somewhere betw
$507 and $685 a year, compa
with the present level of $35
year.

THINK IT OVER . . .
IS THE BARGAIN WORTH THE PRICE TAG?

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